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NEW MODELS AND TECHNIQUES IN CAREER GUIDANCE.

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A MODEL FOR A CAREER GUIDANCE SYSTEM THAT APPEARS TO EFFECT POSITIVE CHANGE FOR STUDENTS, SCHOOLS, AND THE COMMUNITY IS PRESENTED. THERE ARE FOUR PHASES TO THE MODEL, ONE FOR EACH YEAR THE STUDENT IS IN HIGH SCHOOL. THE STUDENT'S SKILLS, APTITUDES, INTERESTS, INTELLIGENCE, AND ACHIEVEMENTS ARE DETERMINED AT INITIAL FACT GATHERING SESSIONS. THIS INFORMATION IS STORED IN A COMPUTER. THE STUDENT MAY OBTAIN INFORMATION FROM THE COMPUTER ABOUT GRADES, COURSES TAKEN, AND COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE. THE COUNSELOR RECEIVES A COPY OF ALL SUCH SESSIONS. STUDENTS ARE ASSIGNED BY THE COMPUTER TO DISCUSSION GROUPS WHICH FOCUS ON THE SELECTION OF OCCUPATIONAL OBJECTIVES. CAREER SEMINARS PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO TALK WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF CAREERS IN WHICH THEY HAVE AN INTEREST. WHERE FEASIBLE, SENIOR YEAR STUDENTS ARE GIVEN WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES. THIS TYPE OF APPROACH APPEARS MEANINGFUL FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT COLLEGE ORIENTED. THE USE OF A SYSTEMS APPROACH, PEER GROUPS FOR COUNSELING, AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES SEEMS TO OPERATE EFFECTIVELY IN PREPARING STUDENTS TO TAKE THEIR PLACE IN THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF A COMMUNITY. (SK)

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NEW MODELS AND TECHNIQUES IN CAREER GUIDANCE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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I. THE INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of change is a phenomenon of the society, the culture, the age in which we live. No job, no position, no profession is safe from the impact of change. There are some projections that indicate that each of us must be prepared to work in three or four or more occupations in our lifetime. Actually, what is more likely is that we will have to be prepared to accept basic changes within our occupations that will result in new and quite different ways in which we do our work.

Many of the changes that have occurred have been accepted by us without realization that anything significant has happened. The carpenter now uses tools and materials that we had not seen twenty years ago. The banker seems to be doing business in the same old way, but all of his basic operations and services have felt the impact of automation. The warehouseman uses pallets, fork-lift trucks, conveyor belts and automated inventory to perform what was formerly a basically manual job. Teaching is changing, although what is happening may be slower and obscure; but programmed instruction, audio-visual aids, television are all having their impact.

One occupation that many of us feel must change is the secondary school counselor. We are especially concerned with the functions of the counselor in career guidance. Today I am going to set up for you a model for a career guidance system that appears to effect change in a positive and effective manner for the students, the schools and the community as a whole.

II. THE MODEL

Mary Smith is a junior in high school. She didn't know whether to return this year. It didn't really seem worthwhile. Both parents are employed. They are seldom home and Mary receives little help, guidance or expressions of interest from them. There are no other children at home. Two older brothers live in a nearby city and an older sister moved to California several years ago. This is not a close family. There isn't much money, but then the Smiths cannot be classed as poor. Mary is lonely and needs friends, but she is expected to do most of the housework and has little time for social life.

If Mary were more mature, she would be a dropout. She is staying only because the classrooms, students and teachers represent some kind of security, perhaps some warmth that she doesn't find at home.

Peter Brown, too, is a junior at Washington High. His father has not been heard from for several years. Pete's mother has had a difficult time with finances since her husband left. She has had difficulties also with Pete, who is headstrong and rebellious. She needs a husband and he needs a father.

Mrs. Brown works as a clerk in a retail store. Her wages are low and the hours are long. She works two nights each week and also is away from home two other evenings for church activities. Although she would like to be strict with Pete, she doesn't know how. They are drifting apart and Pete is just drifting. He pays little or no attention to school and is a potential dropout.

Pete's problem is mostly money. He needs, wants, must have four wheels attached to a gasoline motor. The need is partly status and partly because he is growing up and is seeking freedom. His problems center

around his lack of transportation. Even if he could find something which he could afford, he still would have the insurmountable problem of insurance and daily expenses. Pete sees little or no relationship between his school work and his needs. He will, under normal conditions, take action to satisfy his needs when the split with his mother is a little more definite and when, in addition, an economic opportunity arises.

Washington High is an unusual school. It is located in a mixed industrial and suburban housing area of a large city. The students come from lower middle class and lower class families. There is heavy representation from minority groups and both Spanish speaking and Negroes are present in large numbers. Total school population is about 1500 and is almost evenly divided between girls and boys. The plant is old, but in good repair. The teaching staff is adequate and teaching salaries compare favorably to other urban centers in the north and middle west. These facts do not make the school unusual. Instead, it is the administration of both the school and the system that provide it with distinction.

Last year the school began to experiment with new teaching methods. Each teacher has one or more teaching aids who assist her with discipline, clerical duties and tutoring. The most modern audio-visual aids are in constant planned use. Programmed instruction is being introduced as rapidly as available. Every student is enrolled in a class in reading improvement. The most modern visual aids are used in these classes and the reading material is designed to interest the level of student participating.

The most significant change at Washington is in counseling services. There has been no increase in counseling staff, but there is a completely different approach to the utilization of the professionally qualified counselors. In addition, this staff too has been augmented by clerical non-professionals who perform many routine time-consuming tasks, thus freeing the professionals for the difficult cases which are brought to their attention by every teacher immediately when it is apparent that something is wrong.

Career guidance at Washington is considered not to be a separate function, but a separate division of the total counseling activities. This school has not had significant numbers of students going on to college. At other schools in other cities most counseling, other than that concerned with personal or disciplinary problems, is centered around the students who intend to continue their education. Here it is recognized that the students need help in realistically selecting vocational objectives and then planning their education to meet the qualifications for the jobs that will enable them to find a place within the economic environment.

Mary and Peter are about to participate in a unique experience in American education. They, like all other juniors, have been enrolled in Occupations III. Seniors have been assigned to Occupations IV. It is planned that within two years, Occupations I for freshmen and Occupations II for sophomores will be in operation.

Occupations III meets only once a week. Classes are shortened on Wednesday to provide time. The first sessions are devoted to determining the skills, aptitudes, interests, intelligence and achievements

of each student. The information is gathered, scored where necessary, and transmitted to a computer nearly 400 miles away from Washington. Each student is provided with an identifying number, his or her Social Security number as a matter of fact, and both the name of the student and the number will be necessary to retrieve information from storage at the data processing center. The students are aware of the purpose of their activities and that the objective is to provide them with information about themselves that will help them select career objectives that are both realistic and possible to achieve.

The computer will be available to any student after school hours at any time and as often as Mary and Peter choose. In order to obtain information about themselves, they will use a device that looks like a common business typewriter. After turning on the power, they will activate the device by typing their name and identifying number. The machine will then respond to questions and will provide details concerning grades, courses taken, whether the student appears to be qualifying for college entrance and the specific colleges and universities for which grade and SAT scores indicate he or she might be accepted for admittance. The paper roll on which both questions and responses are recorded is delivered to the counselor on conclusion of the session for recording and filing.

After the initial fact gathering sessions of Occupations II, Mary and Peter find that they are assigned to small groups of eight or ten for discussion. The groups have been carefully selected by means of the computer based on the information which has been developed on each participant. Group discussions may range over a wide selection of

topics, but the counselor-coordinators of the groups will be certain that the focus and ultimate objective of each session is the selection of occupational objectives. A copy of the "Dictionary of Occupational Titles" is available for reference at each meeting and simple pamphlets on basic occupations which have been especially prepared for this purpose are available to each participant.

Mary has expressed interest in technicians work in hospitals and medical laboratories. She also has indicated that she has considered working in a beauty salon. Next week Mary, along with several other girls with similar interests, will attend a career seminar. The counselor-coordinator will have made arrangements for a technician from a local hospital to describe on a planned basis what qualifications are necessary for employment as a medical technician, how to find a job once qualified, the present pay offered, what the work is like, working conditions, possibilities for promotion and other facts about the job. Although questions may be asked during the session, the technician will also be available for individual interviews at the close of the meeting.

Next week, Mary will meet, along with ten other girls, a representative of the Beauty Operators Local, who will describe this occupation in much the same manner as the medical technician, but in addition will describe the examinations necessary for state licensing of the operator.

Meanwhile Peter has been through a similar testing and orientation procedure. He has shown strong interest in auto mechanics and will be assigned to a seminar with the shop foreman from a local major automobile distributorship. Pete has shown also that he has the

ability to perform academically at a much higher level than he has displayed in the past. He will meet with the maintenance supervisor for an airline that has shops at a local airport and will, in all probability, find himself with a group of students who are discussing engineering with an engineer from a space and electronics company.

Students are meeting and will continue to meet with pharmacists, plumbers, ministers, carpenters, contractors, retail merchants, civil service representatives. In fact, they will find available to them workers from practically every occupation in the community. The help received by Mary and Peter is not special, but is a significant part of the total educational program at Washington.

Occupations IV for seniors is functioning in much the same way as Occupations III, except that where practical and possible, students will be provided with work study or work experience opportunities. Students also will visit plants, stores, and offices to observe, ask questions and bring back information to their seminar groups.

Washington High School has given new meaning to education. It is preparing its students to participate in the economic life of the community in the most effective way possible in accordance with individual interests and abilities.

Mary and Peter are fortunate that they are attending school at Washington High. It is doubtful now that they will leave school. Their personal problems are less significant now. They are still there, but they seem less important now that the purpose of education is apparent. Mary doesn't have good home life and Peter still wants a car, but in discovering that they have a future, they have minimized the present.

III. THE CONCLUSIONS

The model is not just a dream or an idea. Some of the techniques described are already in operation -- either on an established or experimental basis.

The systems approach to student information has been tested and with some refinements, can be installed on a practical basis. The cumbersome bookkeeping methods used in schools must be automated if efficiency and accuracy are to be attained. The fringe benefit of such automated systems is, of course, that many time-consuming routine tasks are taken over by the machines, thus freeing personnel to do the things they really ought to do and must do.

The use of groups of peers for counseling is becoming more and more professionally recognized. It is apparent that it is likely that the help we get from each other in group situations may be more accurate and useful than that which is received on the couch in a psychologist's office. There is no practical way in which we can significantly increase the number of counselors anyway. If the schools tried to double the number of counselors in the next two years, there would not be enough available to go around. We must not forget that to qualify as a school counselor in some states requires almost as much academic effort as a Ph.D., and neither the status nor the possible rewards are as good. We must find new ways to use the trained people already available.

The use of community resources in career guidance is sound and practical. No one counselor can expect to know all about every occupation in the complex world in which we live. It is logical to use people from

actual work situations to describe what they do, how they qualified to do it and what benefits are accrued by performing these tasks. We have approached this concept during recent years through Career Days, Job Fairs and similar activities, but the once or twice a year approach is not enough. We must plan, prepare and use carefully the community resources available to us on a continual basis.

The shift in emphasis in education at the secondary school level from purely college preparatory to life preparatory must come. It is time that we stopped thinking about the total educational system as an assembly-line leading to professional qualification. There are too many students who don't complete the objective. We must see that they are prepared, as well, to take their place in the economic life of the community.

Finally, there is nothing wrong and a great deal that is right about a partnership involving the total community in the educational process. The schools, business, industry, government, labor and the professions must all work together if we are going to achieve a Great Society.

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